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**Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Patara SPA
(Türkiye)**

- COMPLAINANT REPORT -

Document prepared by MEDASSET

**Update for the Autumn Bureau Meeting
July 2026**

UPDATE REPORT BY THE NGO

Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean

**LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE (*CARETTA CARETTA*) CONSERVATION
MONITORING IN FETHIYE AND PATARA SPAs, TÜRKİYE**

Document presented by

MEDASSET - the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles

***for the 46th Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on
the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)***

MEDASSET hereby submits an update report to the 3rd Bureau Meeting of the Bern Convention (22-24 September 2026) on the conservation status of sea turtle nesting beaches in Fethiye and Patara Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) in Türkiye.

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SUMMARY

MEDASSET visited Patara and Fethiye SPAs in June and July 2026 to assess and document the conservation status of the nesting beaches. The survey was funded by Aktionsgemeinschaft Artenschutz (AGA), www.aga-artenschutz.de. The following presents the survey findings in relation to each of the measures under Recommendation No. 183 and 182 (2015).

Fethiye Specially Protected Area: Recommendation No. 183 (2015)

The loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nesting beaches in Fethiye (Muğla Province, Türkiye) rank among the 12 most important nesting sites in the country. These beaches lie within the Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protection Area (SPA), established in 1988. Scientific studies indicate a continuing decline in nest numbers at Fethiye.

MEDASSET carried out a site visit in June and July 2026 to assess the management and conservation status of the nesting beach within the Fethiye SPA. To establish a baseline for the reporting process, a four-day field study was conducted, covering both daytime and nighttime monitoring.

Recommendation No. 183 (2015) remains largely disregarded.

Points 1, 2, 4–7, 11, and 15 have not been implemented. New permanent structures continue to be built, including lifeguard towers, water sport facilities with associated storage, and a boat hauling and mooring site at the State Hydraulic Works (DSİ) canal between Karataş Beach and the main section of Yanıklar. Canal "restoration" works at Çalış Hill have altered the river's flow dynamics, and new parking facilities have appeared at Akmaz Beach, among other developments detailed in our full report.

New landscaping and planting beyond the beaches' natural vegetation has also taken place. These efforts rely on exotic, non-native species and require regular irrigation, which increases artificial moisture in the sand and exerts adverse ecological pressure on sensitive nesting zones.

Beach management remains woefully inadequate. Sunbed and umbrella zones have expanded in Section A of Çalış Beach and in the hotel district of Yanıklar Beach, while the relevant ministry has allocated new areas on Karaot Beach. This expansion has significantly narrowed the sensitive nesting zone and increased human pressure on it. Visitor traffic has risen sharply on Akgöl (Karaot) Beach, a site of high-density nesting, where an active campsite and an unregulated caravan parking area have also emerged. There is a complete absence of monitoring or enforcement.

Light pollution remains a critical problem, particularly in the Çalış and Yanıklar sectors of the SPA. Street lamps along the pedestrian walkway lack standardized angling, and most are positioned to shine directly onto the nesting beach.

Point 8 has been only partially implemented: while vehicle access barriers have been installed in several locations, access to the beach remains largely unregulated. We observed vehicles and vehicle tracks in numerous areas, including pristine nesting zones.

Points 13 and 14 have not been implemented. No guards were observed anywhere in the protected area, and enforcement of conservation rules remains entirely absent.

Points 10 and 16 have not been implemented, or only partially so. No monitoring protocol compliant with international standards is currently in place on the Fethiye nesting beach. Only a limited number of prism-type protective cages were recorded on Çalış Beach, though they were more widely deployed elsewhere across the SPA. Human resources remain insufficient relative to the length of coastline and the density of nesting, and the field team observed lacks adequate experience. Monitoring and conservation work of this kind must be led by scientific teams with demonstrated expertise and extensive field experience.

Conclusion

Eleven years after the adoption of Recommendation No. 183 (2015), the overwhelming majority of its measures remain unimplemented. The situation at Fethiye is not one of gradual, partial progress but of sustained neglect: new infrastructure and tourism development have continued to encroach on nesting habitat even as the underlying protections called for in 2015 were never put in place. This represents a serious and continuing failure to comply with the Bern Convention, with measurable consequences for loggerhead sea turtles and the critical habitat on which their survival depends.

The handful of partial measures taken — limited barrier installation, sporadic use of protective cages — fall far short of reversing the cumulative damage already done, and cannot substitute for a functioning system of monitoring, enforcement, and habitat protection. MEDASSET urges the Standing Committee to treat this case as a priority for follow-up, and calls for the immediate and full implementation of all outstanding measures under Recommendation No. 183 (2015), accompanied by a clear timeline and independent verification of compliance.

Patara Specially Protected Area: Recommendation No. 182 (2015)

MEDASSET conducted a site visit to the Patara SPA in July 2026 to evaluate and document the management and conservation status of the nesting beach. The four sub-sections of the beach — Özden, Letoon, Çayağzı, and the Patara Main Beach — were assessed over three days of fieldwork, encompassing both daytime and nighttime monitoring.

As of 2026, the situation at Patara SPA shows only isolated improvements, while the majority of the area remains inadequately protected.

Recommendation Point 1 is partially implemented. Management continues to be concentrated almost exclusively on the Main Beach, leaving the northern and river-mouth sections of the SPA — Özden, Letoon, and Çayağzı — without comparable oversight. It remains imperative that protective and management measures be urgently extended across the full nesting habitat, not just its most visible section.

Multiple issues persist across the area: unauthorized vehicle access, horse riding and evidence of ATV use, construction pressure behind the beach, unregulated beach furniture, and various forms of litter pollution were all documented again this year. The Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change's newly announced action plan for Patara anticipates further increases in tourism and residential pressure in the region, reinforcing the need for stronger management intervention rather than incremental fixes.

Recommendation Point 2 is partially implemented. The Patara Main Beach — also an archaeological site — remains accessible to the public day and night, with night access to the ruins restricted only under the "night museum" scheme. Security presence remains thin: gendarmerie issued warnings to sunset crowds gathered on the dunes on only a single day of the monitoring period, despite 24/7 camera surveillance being in place. Local residents report that tent camping continues at several points along the beach, with patrols growing less frequent. While conditions on the Main Beach have not deteriorated, the same standard of management is still absent at the other beach entrances.

At Çayağzı Beach, a second surveillance camera creates an appearance of control that is not matched in practice: illegal vehicle access and active tent camping were both recorded during nighttime inspections, and resident gatherings continue to contribute to noise and light pollution.

Around the Eşen River mouth, campers at Letoon Beach have begun installing boundary fencing around their sites — a development MEDASSET flagged as a risk in previous years and one that now raises concrete concern about semi-permanent settlement. Abandoned wooden structures at the Letoon entrance have been fully cleared, though winter floods have since deposited a significant volume of driftwood and debris on the beach. At Özden Beach,

the Green Park facility remains derelict and unaddressed. No dune restoration has taken place, though no further degradation was recorded either; erosion in the northern section of South Beach, however, has become markedly worse, likely linked to river dynamics and disrupted dune systems.

Horse riding and motor-vehicle tracks were recorded across every sub-section of the beach except the Main Beach itself, with commercial horseback riding confirmed as an ongoing activity (Rec. Point 2(vi)). No net fishing or recreational angling was observed at the Eşen delta this year, though continued inspection remains essential to sustain that outcome (Rec. Point 2(iv)).

Recommendation Points 3, 4, 8 and 9 are not implemented or are partially implemented at best. Staffing remains the report's most consistent constraint. Despite experienced academic and professional teams, human resources are insufficient to monitor the full beach network, and funding restructuring is again recommended to support recruitment. Outside the Main Beach, nest monitoring and protection remain minimal, and predated nests were recorded even within the actively monitored Main Beach sector. North Beach in particular still lacks any zoning, marking, or protection, and the specific topography of South Beach continues to be inadequately reflected in current zoning (Rec. Points 3, 8).

Access barriers remain in place only at the Patara Archaeological Site and near the Green Park facility; the Letoon and Çayağzı entrances, both at the mouth of the Eşen River, remain unrestricted despite camera surveillance — and at Letoon, one camera has since been removed and the other appears inactive (Rec. Points 4, 7, 8, 9).

Conclusion

Recommendation No. 182 (2015) remains only partially implemented, and progress since our previous report is marginal at best. The Main Beach continues to show the benefit of sustained attention, but this has not been extended to the rest of the SPA — a pattern that, eleven years on, points to a structural gap in management rather than a temporary shortfall. Emerging risks, particularly the semi-permanent camp structures at Letoon and the accelerating erosion on South Beach, suggest that inaction is beginning to compound rather than merely persist.

Patara retains real potential to become a regional model for conservation, comparable to the nearby Dalyan SPA (İztuzu Beach). Realizing that potential, however, requires extending the standard already achieved on the Main Beach across the full nesting habitat — through adequate staffing, consistent enforcement at all beach entrances, and timely resolution of the outstanding zoning and settlement issues — without further delay.

Based on the above findings, MEDASSET calls upon the Turkish authorities to:

- Urgently and fully implement Recommendations No. 182 and 183 (2015) through a comprehensive and updated action plan.
- Establish a functioning enforcement and monitoring mechanism for both SPAs, including a permanent field presence, standardized nesting-beach monitoring protocols compliant with international standards, and sufficiently staffed, experienced

conservation teams — resourced in proportion to the length of coastline and nesting density involved.

Regarding Fethiye:

- Provide an official map clearly outlining the beach and adjacent land areas under dispute, as well as zones permitted for development.
- In accordance with Measure 1 of the Recommendations, impose a building moratorium to halt all further development (e.g. hotels, jetties, lifeguard towers, water sport facilities, boat mooring sites) on or directly behind the nesting beaches.
- Correct existing zoning errors to ensure proper protection of these areas.
- Reverse the expansion of sunbed and umbrella zones at Çalış Beach (Section A), Yanıklar Beach, and Karaot Beach, and restrict beach furniture and irrigated non-native landscaping from encroaching on nesting zones.
- Install and enforce standardized, shielded street lighting along the Çalış and Yanıklar pedestrian walkways to eliminate direct illumination of the nesting beach.
- Ensure vehicle access barriers are installed at all relevant entry points and actively enforced, and regulate the unauthorized camping and caravan parking currently taking place on Akgöl (Karaot) Beach.
- Deploy trained guards with a genuine enforcement mandate across the SPA, including areas currently left entirely unmonitored.
- Allocate adequate resources to ensure the effective protection and management of the beach.

Regarding Patara:

- Guarantee that the entire nesting beach (both North and South sections), nearby marine areas, and the full extent of sand dunes are correctly zoned and protected from any further development.
- Address the concerns outlined in MEDASSET's complaint regarding the now largely completed summer house construction project — specifically its scale, environmental impacts, and the absence of both an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and a carrying capacity study.
- Provide detailed information on additional houses built outside the scope of the main summer house project.
- Extend the level of protection and monitoring currently applied to the Main Beach to the Özden, Letoon, and Çayağzı sections, including consistent guard presence and functioning, actively monitored security cameras.
- Enforce existing prohibitions on horse riding, ATV use, and unauthorized vehicle access, which continue to be recorded across all sub-sections of the beach outside the Main Beach.
- Prevent the semi-permanent camping structures forming at the Eşen River delta and Letoon Beach from becoming permanent settlements, and remove accumulated debris and abandoned structures, including the derelict Green Park facility.
- Undertake dune restoration and erosion mitigation, particularly in the northern section of South Beach where erosion has become increasingly severe.
- Reinstate and maintain clear nesting-zone signage across all beach sections, and restore the sea turtle information cabin to its intended educational function.
- Regulate the unrestricted expansion of personal umbrella use on the Main Beach.

MEDASSET respectfully calls upon the Bern Convention Standing Committee to:

- Include the case files in the agenda of the 46th Meeting of the Standing Committee for discussion.
- Maintain the case files open to ensure continued monitoring and follow-up.

Urge the Turkish authorities to promptly and fully implement all provisions of Recommendations No. 182 and 183 (2015).

Annex 2: MEDASSET - The Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles

REPORT OF 2026 FOR PATARA SPA, TURKEY

Description of the Patara Nesting Beach (Figures 1-2): The Patara Beach, measuring approximately 12 km in length, is divided into northern and southern sections by the Eşen River, which discharges into the sea through the middle of the Special Protection Area (SPA). The northern end is bordered by the Özden River. There are a total of 5 access points along the beach. On the North Beach, there is one entry point at the mouth of the Özden River (Özden Beach) and another near the Eşen River (Letoon Beach). The South Beach features three entry points: one at the mouth of the Eşen River (Çayağzı Beach), one leading over the sand dunes to the middle of the beach, and another at the southern end of the beach (Patara Main Beach).

In July 2026, MEDASSET visited the Patara SPA to conduct on-site investigations and document the management and conservation status of the nesting beach. Fieldwork was completed over three days, encompassing both daytime and nighttime monitoring. The issues raised in the reports submitted by the defence and the complainant have been properly evaluated and documented. Although structured, academic, and professional monitoring efforts are actively conducted in the region, the number of field personnel is considered insufficient. It is recommended to restructure the funding of regional conservation resources to increase the number of experienced staff. Furthermore, inadequate nesting cage deployment was observed at certain spots. Illegal vehicle access to the beach was also identified via the Letoon and Çayağzı entrance points.

During the fieldwork, the threats outlined in previous reports were re-evaluated. In the Patara SPA, issues such as unauthorized vehicle entry, horseback riding activities, increasing construction within the beach's viewshed, the expansion of beach furniture in the Main Beach section, and various types of litter pollution were recorded. Particularly, the rising number of building constructions driven by the expansion of the Patara residential settlement is projected to further escalate light pollution.

Below are the findings obtained under each mitigation measure heading regarding the challenges observed in the Patara SPA within the framework of Recommendation No. 182 (2015):

1. Urgently ensure that Patara nesting beach receives appropriate legal protection and management, in line with its exceptional, natural and ecological value;

During the fieldwork, it was observed that the Patara Main Beach, which is also an archaeological site, remains open to visitors both day and night. While access to the beach and the archaeological site is permitted during the day, entry to the ancient ruins after 19:00 is restricted exclusively to the scope of "night museum" operations. A watchman on duty on the beach was observed occasionally using a white light source to inspect the area where the beach furniture is located.

A high volume of visitors gathers on the sand dunes at sunset to watch the view. Solar-powered security cameras have been installed in this area, which is

supposedly monitored 24/7 by the gendarmerie. However, throughout the duration of the fieldwork, gendarmerie personnel issued warnings on only a single day; apart from this instance, no information, warnings, or evacuation interventions were directed toward the visitors in the area. Interviews with local residents indicated that tent camping is widely practiced at multiple points along the beach and that gendarmerie patrols are conducted infrequently. Although significant progress has been achieved in the conservation and management of the Patara Main Beach, it has been determined that a similar level of protection is lacking at the other access points of the beach.

The second security camera monitoring point is located at the entrance of Çayağzı Beach, projecting an impression of active surveillance. However, nighttime inspections revealed unauthorized vehicle entries and active tent camping on the beach. Furthermore, local residents gathering on the shore for social purposes contribute to local noise and light pollution.

The new action plan announced by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change (<https://csb.gov.tr/bakanliktan-patara-ya-ozel-koruma-plani-bakanlik-faaliyetleri-41718>) includes the following measures:

- Sewerage lines will be rehabilitated, and new networks will be established for residential, urban workspace, tourism, and social infrastructure areas falling within the zoning plan boundaries.
- Solutions aimed at reducing motorized vehicle access to the vicinity of the beach will be implemented.
- Caravan parking and camping zones will be designated, and eco-friendly, sustainable tourism models will be supported by providing essential infrastructure services such as electricity, water, and waste management in these zones.
- An executive committee responsible for managing administration, monitoring, and inter-institutional coordination processes within the SEPA (Special Environmental Protection Area) will be established.

These developments clearly indicate that tourism and demographic pressures in the region are set to escalate. Consequently, tightening waste disposal controls and enhancing beach security have become critical imperatives.

2. Urgently set up, enforce and monitor the implementation of strict regulations which:

- (i) *prohibit further development on the beach (including buildings, structures, roads) and enable the removal of abandoned illegal facilities and restoration of the dunes; during the nesting/hatching season;***

Aside from the Patara Main Beach Facility located at the southern end of Patara Beach and the abandoned Green Park facility on Özden Beach at the northern end, no permanent structures remain in the area. The construction crane in the archaeological restoration and excavation zone has been removed. Within the scope of "night museum" operations, the archaeological site has been opened to visitors, and the restored ancient lighthouse has been illuminated with yellow spotlights. Although a

detailed assessment of its impact could not be conducted because the illumination is not directly visible from the beach, it is critical to emphasize that any lighting that could potentially affect the nesting beach must be avoided.

There are some fishermen's shelters on the Eşen River, alongside temporary accommodation areas and shower units on Çayağzı Beach. A high density of daily visitors was observed in these areas. While the number of tent-using campers has decreased compared to previous years, it was determined that the remaining campers have installed boundary fences around their sites, establishing a semi-permanent presence. There is an ongoing concern that this practice could transform into unregulated, permanent settlements over time.

All abandoned wooden structures at the entrance of Letoon Beach have been entirely removed. However, a significant amount of driftwood and wooden debris, washed ashore by winter floods, was observed on the beach. At the northernmost section of Özden Beach, some permanent structures draw attention. In particular, the Green Park facility was observed to remain in its abandoned and derelict state.

No restoration or rehabilitation activities were observed on the dune structures. Nevertheless, no significant degradation of the dune ecosystem was detected under current conditions.

(ii) regulate the extent and use of furniture on the beach and ensure furniture is removed from the nesting zone at night;

The sunbeds and umbrellas on Patara Main Beach are stored at two different points in front of the facility, positioned behind the nesting zone. However, it was observed that only a small fraction of the sunbeds are collected during the evening hours. The systematic alignment of sunbeds within the nesting zone, combined with their increased quantity and the expansion of the commercial layout compared to previous years, not only narrows the available nesting zone for sea turtles but also restricts their maneuverability on the beach.

Throughout Patara Beach, visitors were observed to use their personal umbrellas in an unregulated manner, without any guiding or warning signage in place. This lack of regulation poses a potential physical threat to nesting sites.

There are no structures or activities related to water sports in the area. However, the lifeguard tower is positioned inside the nesting zone. While the volleyball court adjacent to the facility has been removed, the wooden boardwalk extending from the front of the facility toward the sea remains in place.

Micro-litter (cigarette butts, organic waste, etc.) was detected on the beach. Although designated smoking areas have been established to mitigate waste accumulation, cigarette butts were still encountered at numerous points across the beach.

(iii) *prohibit illumination of the beach;*

Alongside the bungalow and tent camping areas located in the Eşen River delta, a high influx of daily visitors was observed on Çayağzı Beach. This user group has been identified as a major source of light and noise pollution, particularly during the nighttime hours.

At Letoon Beach, the adherence of visitors to light and noise regulations has decreased compared to the previous year. Particularly during field inspections conducted in the evening hours, it was documented on-site that daily visitors were utilizing high-lumen light sources within the nesting habitats.

On the other hand, Özden Beach was observed to be sufficiently dark, with no detected light pollution. This favorable condition is considered to stem from a significant decrease in the number of visitors in this specific area compared to previous years.

(iv) *Prohibit fishing with nets in front of the beach;*

During the course of the study, no fishing vessels or recreational angling activities were observed in the vicinity of the beach. However, it is imperative to maintain rigorous monitoring and inspection efforts throughout the nesting season, with particular attention given to tracking net fishing activities, in order to ensure the continuous enforcement of existing prohibitions.

(v) *Prohibit camping on the beach and on riversides in view of the beach:*

It was observed that all camper accommodations are concentrated around the Eşen Creek Delta. While no structures were encountered on Özden Beach, visitors wishing to camp generally preferred Letoon Beach, and it was determined that there have been no changes to the structures previously established on Çayağzı Beach in recent years.

(vi) *Prohibit horse riding and 4x4 or quad safaris on the beach:*

Throughout the beach, particularly within the sensitive sand dune areas, a significant amount of horse manure was encountered. During on-site monitoring activities, horses tied to trees in the forested area adjacent to the sand dunes, as well as horses being actively utilized on the beach, were recorded. Furthermore, online investigations utilizing Google Maps (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/GQMm41Xz18RHwcjw7>) data confirmed that commercial horseback riding activities are actively conducted directly on the beach.

In addition, tire tracks belonging to ATVs and other motorized vehicles were recorded at multiple locations along the shore (documented with photos of tire tracks and manure). These tracks were observed across all sub-sections of the beach, with the sole exception of the Patara Main Beach.

(vii) Define fines for non-compliance with above regulations

On all 21 nesting beaches under the joint responsibility of the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (DKMP) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the General Directorate for Preservation of Natural Heritage of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change, nighttime access to the beaches has been prohibited during the nesting and incubation season between May and September. Additionally, activities such as entering these beaches with vehicles, pitching tents, camping, and lighting fires or barbecues are strictly prohibited. As of 2026, the administrative fines to be imposed on those acting in violation of these prohibitions have been set at 699,245 TRY for natural persons (individuals), and three times this amount, totaling 2,097,735 TRY, for corporations, hotels, beach operators, and other legal entities. In cases where destruction of nests or eggs is documented, criminal investigations are initiated under the Turkish Penal Code, alongside civil lawsuits for damages. Furthermore, a directive prohibiting the hand-feeding of sea turtles was circulated to all administrative units along the nesting coastline at the beginning of April.

3. Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated for the control, management and enforcement of regulations;

The region falls under the operational and supervisory jurisdiction of the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (DKMP) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the General Directorate for Preservation of Natural Heritage of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change. Conservation and monitoring efforts have been carried out by the same team for many years; however, the available human resources are considered insufficient to cover the entire area effectively.

Although all nests on the Patara Main Beach are actively monitored and controlled, predated nests were encountered across the wider beach area. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the protective cages and nesting setups across the overall beach appeared poorly maintained.

While physical barriers are present at the entrance to the Patara Ancient City and at the beach entrance next to the abandoned Green Park facility, the Letoon and Çayağzı beach entrances located at the mouth of the Eşen River allow unrestricted access. Regarding the security cameras deployed to monitor entries and exits at Letoon Beach, it was observed that one has been removed, while the other is poorly maintained, suggesting that it is currently inactive. Particularly, although the security camera near Green Park is equipped with motion sensors, it was determined that none of the surveillance cameras in the area are subject to active oversight or monitoring.

4. Continue to prevent uncontrolled human settlement behind the beach, particularly where these may result in making the beaches unsuitable for turtle nesting;

Aside from ongoing projects whose construction began in previous years, no new construction developments were observed within Gelemiş Village. However, although the zoning plan regarding the Patara Special Protection Area (SPA), which entered into force in 2024, was annulled by a court decision following a lawsuit (<https://webdosya.csb.gov.tr/db/mugla/duyu-ruklar/patara-ozel--8230-76374-20230221162209.pdf>), illegal construction activities were recorded within the forested areas. Specifically, bungalows have been built in the forested area behind the abandoned Green Park facility, and new villas have been constructed inside the forest with a direct view of the Eşen River Delta.

5. Ensure that litter is periodically removed from the beach and dunes;

Although a decrease in the overall amount of litter was observed across the beach compared to previous years, a highly visible concentration of cigarette butts was detected on the Patara Main Beach. Because the cleaning activities conducted by the operating facility are limited solely to large packaging waste, an accumulation of micro-litter has formed in the area. Additionally, in other sections of the beach, marine litter transported by the action of waves and wind was noted to accumulate within the depressions of the sand dunes.

On the other hand, waste bins and containers regularly emptied by the municipality are present in the Çayağzı, Letoon, and Özden sectors of the beach.

6. Address the problem of predation, including through population control's programmes;

During on-site monitoring and fieldwork conducted on the beach, predated sea turtle eggshells were encountered. The ghost crab population across the beach was observed to be low, and it is considered that terrestrial predators such as foxes, jackals, and badgers are primarily influential in nest predation. On the other hand, no stray or free-roaming dogs were encountered in the region during the monitoring period.

7. Ensure the proper fencing of all nests in areas with high human presence during the day, so as to protect them from trampling and from beach furniture;

The vast majority of the nests on the Patara Main Beach have been marked and protected with prism cages. In contrast, no caging applications were encountered on the Çayağzı, Letoon, and Özden beaches.

8. Urgently set up long-term conservation and research programmes, entrusted to a permanent team that should be granted adequate man power

to monitor the entire beach (north and south) during the entire nesting/hatching season and protect all nests if necessary;

Monitoring activities have been conducted in the Patara SPA for many years. Although the field team carries out its activities with extensive experience, there are significant limitations regarding the human resources and funding necessary to ensure equal, synchronized, and comprehensive monitoring across the entire beach network. Consequently, nest detection and conservation efforts in the sub-sectors outside the Patara Main Beach are considered to remain somewhat limited and have not yet reached the desired level of expansion.

9. Improve information to and awareness of tourists about sea turtle nesting and on correct behaviour for the sustainable use of the beach and install clearer signage to indicate the nesting zone;

Only a few information signs remain scattered across the beach. A large portion of the signs present in previous years have been removed, while some of the remaining ones have faded or become illegible due to weathering (e.g., the İncikçi sign and the sign buried within the bushes at the Eşen Çayağzı location). The existing signs are located at prominent points such as the entrance to the Patara Main Beach, the sand dunes, and near the abandoned Green Park facility. The stakes marking the boundaries of the nesting zone need to be recalibrated and rearranged by remeasuring their distances relative to the nesting zones of previous years.

Information and awareness activities in the region have largely been reduced to small labels and signs attached directly to the prism cages. It is observed that visitors to the beach do not sufficiently comply with the conservation regulations. In particular, the use of personal umbrellas on the Patara Main Beach continues to increase in an unregulated manner compared to previous years, and this issue must urgently be brought under strict supervision.

Furthermore, multiple site visits confirmed that the sea turtle information cabin does not serve its intended purpose and is currently utilized exclusively as a storage space for the protective cages.

10. Improve information and education of the local community about sea turtle nesting, correct behaviour for the use of the beach, and intrinsic value of nature; and involve them in the protection, conservation, and management of the nesting beach;

In general, it was observed that visitors lack awareness regarding the ecological status of the region and utilize the area as an ordinary beach. Although the awareness and consciousness levels of the local population are remarkably high, visitors coming to the region were found to be unaware of the local biodiversity. Furthermore, due to external migration into the area, it is considered that a decline in conservation awareness has also begun to occur over time among the local community.

Figure 1. Urgently ensure that Patara nesting beach receives appropriate legal protection and management, in line with its exceptional, natural and ecological value



A large crowd of visitors at the dunes around sunset.



Patara SPA, Solar-powered camera towers have been erected at two entry points to provide a live feed at full 360 degrees 24/7. a) the dunes b) Çayağzı beach c) Özden beach d) Letoon beach

Figure 2. Urgently set up, enforce and monitor the implementation of strict regulations

(i) prohibit further development on the beach (including buildings, structures, roads) and enable the removal of abandoned illegal facilities and restoration of the dunes; during the nesting/hatching season;



Abandoned Green Park facility at the northern end in Özden Beach



Patara Main Beach: The crane behind the beach has been moved out of the restoration area; however, the historic lighthouse has begun to be illuminated by yellow spotlights.



Along the Esen River, some fishermen's shelters are present, and temporary accommodation



Çayağzı and Letoon, some fishermen's shelters are present, and temporary accommodation



The status of abandoned wooden structures disrupting beach integrity on Letoon Beach in 2025 (top), and the current state of the site in 2026 showing their complete removal and clearance (bottom).

(ii) regulate the extent and use of furniture on the beach and ensure furniture is removed from the nesting zone at night;



Sunbeds and umbrellas have been stored in two separate areas behind the nesting zone in front of the facility.



Only a small portion of the sunbeds are collected in the evenings.



Visitors appear to use umbrellas freely, and the absence of informational signage or guidance poses a potential threat to sea turtle nests.



Although the lifeguard tower and wooden walkways within the nesting area maintain their presence, the volleyball court added to the beach in 2025 (top) has been completely removed in 2026 (bottom).



There is trash scattered across the beach.

(iii) prohibit illumination of the beach



A group of visitors on the beach contributing to light and noise pollution within the sensitive nesting area during nighttime hours

(v) Prohibit camping on the beach and on riversides in view of the beach:

All camping accommodations were observed to be concentrated around the Esen River delta.

(vi) Prohibit horse riding and 4x4 or quad safaris on the beach:

Horses, whose presence was initially detected through droppings and footprints near trees on the sand dunes, were observed from a distance actively utilizing the beach on their return route.



Although no active ATV presence was encountered during the on-site beach inspections, a safari tour was intercepted along the Eşen Stream route, and motor vehicle tracks were detected across the beach.

3. Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated for the control, management and enforcement of regulations;



There are barriers at the entrance Green Park

4. Continue to prevent uncontrolled human settlement behind the beach, particularly where these may result in making the beaches unsuitable for turtle nesting;



Apart from structures whose construction had begun in previous years, no new developments have been observed within the village of Gelemiş.

5. Ensure that litter is periodically removed from the beach and dunes;



Trash accumulating on sand dunes and regularly emptied trash cans.

7. Ensure the proper fencing of all nests in areas with high human presence during the day, so as to protect them from trampling and from beach furniture



There are nests surrounded by prismatic cages and protective bands on Patara Main Beach.

9. Improve information to and awareness of tourists about sea turtle nesting and on correct behaviour for the sustainable use of the beach and install clearer signage to indicate the nesting zone



A significant reduction or removal of visible warning and information signs along the beach has been observed. Currently, only a highly limited number of signs remain: one at the entrance of Patara Main

Beach, two within the beach area, one at the mouth of the Eşen Stream, one on the sand dune, and one adjacent to Green Park.

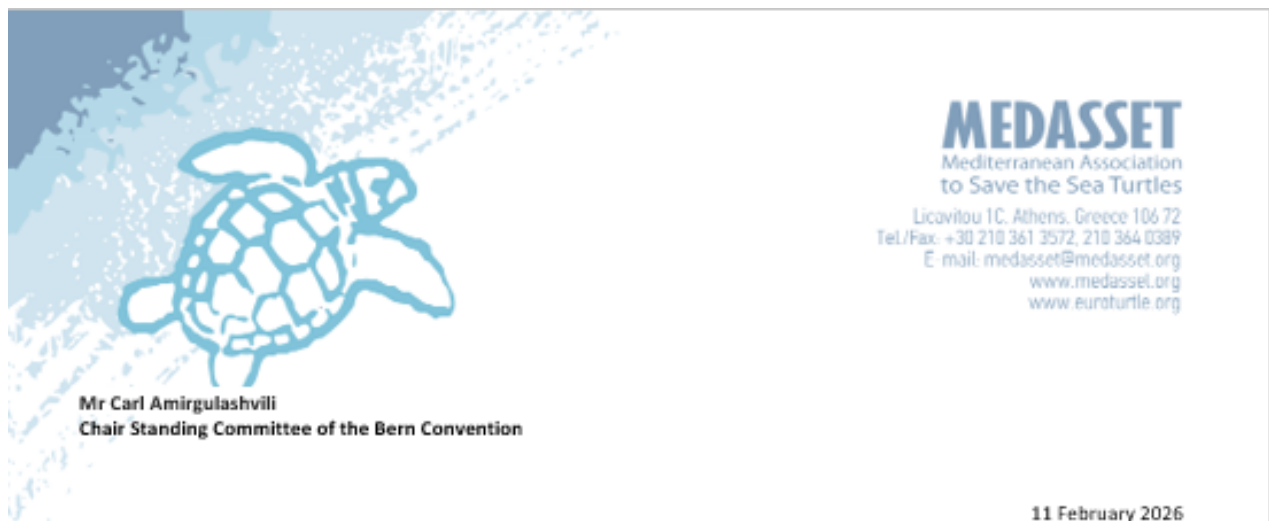


Umbrella use on Patara Main Beach should be strictly monitored and regulated



Information kiosk; used more as a cage storage than for providing information.

Update for the Spring Bureau Meeting 2026



Mr Carl Amirgulashvili
Chair Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

11 February 2026

Our Ref. 07.2026

Re: Update regarding Recommendations No. 95, 182, 183, and 226 (Kazanli, Patara, Fethiye, and Mersin Anamur, Turkey)

Dear Mr. Amirgulashvili,

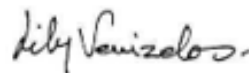
MEDASSET wishes to provide a brief status update regarding the aforementioned recommendations.

At this time, there are no significant new on-the-ground developments to report. However, we would like to highlight our continued readiness to support the implementation of these conservation measures.

In a recent meeting with the IUCN Mediterranean (IUCN-Med) representative, we formally expressed our commitment to participate in the upcoming protection and implementation processes for Patara (Recommendation No. 182). We look forward to contributing our expertise once the mission and subsequent actions are organized. We remain at your disposal for any further information and will continue to monitor these files closely.

Yours sincerely,

Yours sincerely,



Lily Venizelos

MEDASSET President

Member of IUCN-Species Survival Commission: Marine Turtle Specialist Group |

CC:

Bern Convention, Council of Europe:

Ms. Alessandra SIINO, Secretary of the Bern Convention

Mr. Marc HORY, Project Manager - European Diploma for Protected Areas and Emerald Network

Ms. Marta MEDLINSKA, Programme Manager